DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 202 241 FL 012 323

AUTHOR Anderson-Levitt, Kathryn M.
TITLE The Meaning of "Searching" in a French First Grade.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 54p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association (79th, Washington, DC, December 6, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Classroom Communication; Elementary Education; *Ethnography; French; Grade 1; *Reading Instruction; Sociocultural Patterns; Sociolinguistics; *Speech Communication; *Teacher Behavior; Teaching Styles; Videotape Recordings; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS *France; *Performative Language

ABSTRACT

To determine what counts as success in a French first grade, an ethnographer investigated what happens when the teacher "applies" her categories of "things students do" to particular situations. The category called "searching" served as an example. To produce a body of data, the teacher commented on videotapes of ordinary events in her classroom. However, perceptual cues which inspired her to say that a child was "searching" could not always be found within the videotaped incidents. The model of an informant who matches cues from the environment to a cognitive map did not work. Instead, the teacher's comments about the tapes had to be understood as speech acts in which she was accounting for previously stated theories about students. (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED202241

FEB 2 1981

The Meaning of "Searching" in a French First Grade

Kathryn M. Anderson-Levitt

Department of Anthropology
Stanford University

Paper presented in a session on "The Learning Environment in Cross-Cultural Perspective" at the 79th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, D.C., December 6, 1980.

FL 012 393

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Kathryn M. Anderson-Levitt

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

The Meaning of "Searching" in a French First Grade

ABSTRACT

To determine what counts as success in a French first grade, the ethnographer investigated what happens when the teacher "applies" her categories of "Things Students Do" to particular situations. The category called "searching" served as an example. To produce a body of data, the teacher commented on videotapes of ordinary events in her classroom. However, perceptual cues which inspired her to say that a child was "searching" could not always be found within the videotaped incidents. The model of an informant who matches cues from the environment to a cognitive map did not work. Instead, the teacher's comments about the tapes had to be understood as speech acts in which she was accounting for previously stated theories about students.

CONTENTS

What Happens When a Cognitive Category Is Applied in Real Situations? 1

The Research 4

Connotations of "Searching" 6

The Viewing Session Comments about "Searching" 7

A Systematic Search for Cues 21

Summary 29

Theories and Strategies, Individually Tailored 30

Conclusion 44

The Meaning of "Searching" in a French First Grade[1]

Kathryn M. Anderson-Levitt

December, 1980

What Happens When a Cognitive Category Is Applied in Real Situations?

If the Eastern Subanun refer frequently to Kinds of Disease (Frake, 1961) and a restaurant kitchen staff shares cultural knowledge about Kinds of Kitchen Equipment (Schroedl in Spradley and McCurdy, 1972), then Kinds of Things Students Do in Class must be a salient Domain in the professional culture of schoolteachers. At least so it seemed listening to elementary schoolteachers in France, who talked a great deal about "paying attention," "falling asleep," "applying oneself," "fooling around," "whimpering," "talking," "working on one's own," and other things students did.

I listened to French schoolteachers as part of a study of what counts as success in a real first grade classroom. The purpose of the research was to determine what children actually did, day in and day out, to convince their teacher that they were learning to read properly (reading being the make-or-break skill in first grade and beyond). Documenting what counts as success in one classroom, I believed, would reveal more truly than all the laboratory studies of reading the kinds of things which really go wrong when a child fails first grade.

To identify what counts as success in the chosen classroom, I planned two levels of research. On the one hand, I had to discover the teacher's categories for Things Students Do, for surely among those behaviors were the things the teacher looked for as signs that the child was progressing. On the other hand and of equal importance, I had to ask what the teacher interpreted as instances of a given category in specific situations, for a common category like "paying attention" could refer to quite different kinds of behaviors from one classroom to the next.

Designed as an exploration of what happens when an informant applies cognitive categories in real situations, the study incorporated an implicit model of human perception. I discovered much later that my model resembled early stages in teacher decision making as described by Joyce (1978-79) and Shavelson and Borko (1979) (see also Neisser, 1976:15-18, and Shulman and Elstein, 1975:5-21). The model posits persons who carry around cultural "maps" of Things That Are and Can Be, that is, categories of conceivable objects, places, events, and so on. In a situation, a person picks up cues from the environment, finds that they match a category, and says, "Aha! This is an instance of X." Thus I supposed teachers pick up cues from everyday classroom incidents which they "match" or "add up" or otherwise "process" to determine that a child is or is not "fooling around," is or is not "paying attention," and so forth. Then, accumulating these interpretations of particular events, the teachers produce general evaluations of a child's performance to date.

In analyzing the results of the research, I came to focus on one category of behavior used frequently by my teacher-informant in such statements as "Il cherche" and "Il ne cherche pas." I gloss the word as "searching," although it might be translated less literally as "thinking," "looking for the answer" or "trying," depending on the situation. The very difficulty of translating the word invites a detailed examination of its meaning and of the cues to which it refers in specific incidents. This paper reports that examination.

I particularly sought the cues which distinguished behaviors labeled "searching" from behaviors labeled "not searching." In contrast, most ethnosemantic analyses seek features (usually semantic components rather than perceptual cues, although the two may be confused) which distinguish a group of different categories from each other, as "searching" from "paying attention," from "applying oneself" and from other Things Students Do. I concentrated on the positive and negative cases of a single category instead because I thought my approach would lead more quickly to an explanation of what distinguished successful from unsuccessful behavior. In doing so I skipped the question of when "searching" and "not searching" become an issue at all, only to have to return to it at the end of this paper.

Analysis of the findings took me in an unexpected direction. I never did pinpoint what counts as success, nor even what counts as "searching" in my informant's classroom. Instead, I

learned how difficult it is to document the perceptual cues to which someone is attending--if she is attending to cues from the "outer" world at all. I also learned that a reading lesson differs from an interview to the extent that "not searching" in one may be called "searching" in the other.

The Research

The study took place in France, where the unfamiliar school system and language made it a little less awkward to ask teachers about something which seemed as self-evident as how children demonstrate they are learning to read. I visited public and private elementary schools in a middle-sized city in central France, observing two dozen teachers and interviewing them about their students' performances. Long-term fieldwork occurred in three first grade classrooms and one kindergarten. However, the findings reported here concern only the first grade taught by Madame Jeannette Durand in a public school in a mixed middle-class and working-class neighborhood.

I observed Jeannette's class at the beginning of the 1976-77 schoolyear, in the last two months of the 1977-78 year, and from September to March of the 1978-79 year. I listened to her talk about students to her colleagues, to her husband, to parents, and to the children themselves. I also taperecorded several interviews in which I asked her, hoping to keep her talk concrete and "natural," to tell me how individual students were performing at that moment and to explain how she knew what she told.

Those interviews and my observation notes documented how

the teacher talked about Things Students Do including, as it turned out, the behavior she called "searching." However, to identify what counted as "searching" in Jeannette's classroom, I had simultaneously to record Jeannette's typical comments and the incidents to which they referred. To this end, we videotaped students during ordinary lessons on three occasions in the schoolyear, Jeannette and I watched sections of the videotapes a day or two after each set of tapes was made, and I asked her to point out on the monitor any behavior or incident which gave her information about a student's current level of performance. I avoided referring to any specific kind of behavior until after she mentioned it, to allow her own categories to emerge "naturally." These video viewing sessions were audio-recorded.

Although the viewing sessions were meant to recreate the teacher's interpretations of students' behaviors during class, there were important differences between the two situations. In the viewing sessions, the teacher relived events she had already experienced once, had the opportunity to watch them a second or third time, had the leisure to focus on a single student without worrying what the other 23 were up to, and could reflect on rather than act on what she saw. Nonetheless, the viewing sessions produced invaluable data--a double transcript which matched representations of actual classroom events with the teacher's immediate comments about them.

Connotations of "Searching"

Before examining the teacher's use of the word "searching" during the viewing sessions, I must explain how the concept fit into her schema of ideas about teaching first grade.[2]

Toward the end of the fieldwork, I abstracted a sketch of Jeannette's broad concepts from her remarks about specific students and from general philosophical statements she had volunteered. First grade is hard, she believed, and a child has to want to work and have an interest in learning to do well. The child must apply himself, pay attention and "search." I showed this sketch to Jeannette and she accepted it as a representation of her ideas, adding only that a child must "work by himself."

On return from the field, I sorted the teacher's comments more systematically to discover what kinds of remarks typified students who were doing well as opposed to those who were "having more trouble" in learning to read. "Searching" came up frequently both in comments to students and in remarks to the ethnographer. The gist of the comments depended on the time of year and the student in question. Before Christmas, Jeannette would say of her average students that they were paying attention and "searching," whereas she said of the students having trouble that they "said anything (off the top of their heads)." She remarked about two or three superior students that they didn't need to search and were already decoding. After Christmas she noted that the bulk of the class was learning to decode, while

the poor students were (still) "obliged to search" and were finally beginning to do so. By implication, the average students no longer needed to "search" in the same sense, for their decoding was becoming automatic.

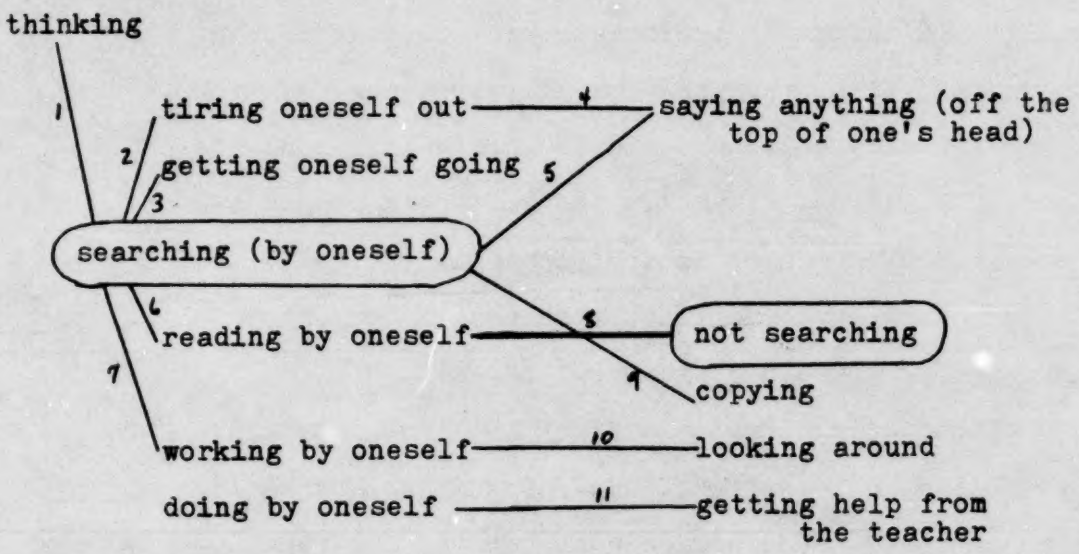
Figure 1 illustrates the overlapping connotations of "searching" and "not searching" by plotting pairs of verbs which the teacher equated or opposed in specific comments to me or to the class. Terms in the left-hand column belong with "searching" and those in the right-hand column with "not searching." Each numbered line represents a comment in which the linked terms appeared together.

Two themes emerge from the figure. First, "searching" requires making an effort ("tiring oneself out," "getting going by oneself"). Second, students who do not make the effort to "search" (or who cannot "search," as Jérôme, mentioned in note 4), have options. They may simply "say anything" as opposed to "thinking," or they may seek help as opposed to "working" or "doing" by themselves. If they seek help, they may do so by "looking around" and "copying" from perhaps unwitting classmates, or they may lean on the teacher to lead them through an oral performance.

The Viewing Session Comments about "Searching"

This analysis will concern only a segment from the first viewing session, conducted at the end of November, and a segment of the last viewing session, conducted in early March. The November segment shows an entire reading lesson at the blackboard

Figure 1 Connotations of "Searching" and "Not Searching"



Comments linking the terms:[3]

1. To the ethnographer about David, 3/2: "He needs to think, to search." Also compare these two remarks made in class, both praising a student for pausing before raising his hand: "It's good because he thinks" (about Jean-Marc, 10/17), and "Yann searches before answering" (10/17).

2. To the ethnographer, watching Nathalie on a videotape made in January: "She searches. She tires herself out."

3. To Jacques in class, 3/1: ". . . you have to get going by yourself! You see that you know it. When you search, it works. But you have to do it before I tell you. (Pause) You search by yourself. Yes?"

4. To the ethnographer about Claire, 10/19: "She says anything when she doesn't want to tire herself out." Compare this remark about Jérôme, 10/19: "He says anything when he's tired (ill)."

5. To Nathalie in class, 11/7: "Search! (Pause) She says anything and then she whimpers."

and the March segment an almost complete, comparable lesson, whereas the rest of the viewing sessions concern only fragments of reading lessons, dictations and other activities. Although exclusive focus on the two blackboard lessons precludes consideration of how the teacher's comments might have varied with the kind of lesson, having the entire transcript will permit reference to the larger context in which particular incidents occurred. Furthermore, the lesson at the blackboard was the archetype of the reading lesson in Jeannette's class and in most French first grades I observed.

Within the transcripts of the viewing sessions for these two reading lessons, I identified every comment the teacher made which concerned "searching" or "not searching" and referred to a student on the screen at the moment. Because of the overlapping connotations of "searching" plotted in Figure 1, I

---

6. In class, 3/1: Jacques misreads la for par, and the teacher says, "No, no, you search." A student calls out par, and the teacher exclaims, "Can he read it by himself?!?"

7. To the ethnographer about Anne, 3/2: "But she doesn't manage to work by herself, to search by herself."

8. To the ethnographer about Claire, 11/7: "She never searches. She's not capable of reading by herself, of concentrating by herself on something."

9. To Anne in class, 11/24: "You see! When you don't copy, and you search in your head, it's very good."

10. To Richard in class, 1/11: "You don't know the y because you're looking all over, you've lost the habit of working by yourself."

11. To Jacques in class, 3/1: "When are you going to start doing it by yourself?!?" Jacques pauses, then mumbles something. The teacher continues, "Well! I think I have to help you."

included any remark Jeannette made about a student copying from a neighbor or doing work "by himself." These "searching"-related comments as well as the favorable or unfavorable evaluations each implies are summarized in Figure 2. The comments are numbered sequentially, and where more than one comment refers to a continuing video sequence, decimals distinguish one comment from the next.

Out of curiosity, I also identified every "searching"-related remark the teacher made in class to an identifiable student during the same reading lessons. These remarks, summarized in Figure 3, happened to have been recorded on the videotapes and make an interesting corpus to compare with the viewing session comments. They are labeled sequentially with letters of the alphabet.

Preliminary Observations

A glance at the names of the students in Figures 2 and 3 reveals that the teacher made "searching"-related comments with respect to only four students, although we watched thirteen students while viewing these lessons. The four students to whom she limited her remarks about "searching"--all boys--all had trouble learning to read, as indicated by the fact that the teacher placed them with four other boys and girls into a special reading group in late March. This raises the question which I postponed at the beginning of the paper, namely, in what circumstances does the category of "searching" become relevant? Later I will have to examine incidents about which

Figure 2 . Summary of Viewing Session Comments about "Searching"

Incident		Comment	Evaluation
NOVEMBER LESSON			
Benoit Class reads together	1.0	"repeats what he hears," "doesn't search"	–
Jacques Class reads together	2.0	"repeats after," "doesn't search"	–
Xavier Other students read	3.0	"doesn't give a damn, "isn't searching"	–
Jacques Other students read	4.0	"listens to and locks onto the others"	–
David Recites by himself	5.0	"He searches."	+
MARCH LESSON			
Jacques Recites by himself	6.1	"He's beginning to search."	+
	6.2	"It's the head that's searching."	+
	6.3	"He found the <u>ai</u> by himself."	+
Jacques Other students read	7.1	"He's doing nothing . . ."	–
	7.2	"--Ah! Yes he is."	–
Jacques Recites by himself	8.0	"He doesn't wait for the others."	+
David Recites by himself	9.0	"He's searching."	+

Figure 3 Summary of Comments in Class about "Searching"

Incident		Comment	Evaluation
NOVEMBER LESSON David Recites by himself	A	"But say it by yourself." (See p. 16; compare 5.0.)	–
MARCH LESSON Jacques Recites by himself	B.1	"When will you do it . . . by yourself?" (See p. 17; compare 6.1.)	–
	B.2	"You can't get yourself going to do it by yourself?" (See p. 17; compare 6.2.)	–
	B.3	"No, no, you search." (See note 6 in Figure 1.)	–
	B.4	"When you search, it works." (See note 3 in Figure 1.)	mixed
David Recites by himself	C	"But you're not searching." (See p. 21.)	–
Xavier Called on to spell a syllable	D	(After Xavier remained silent for five seconds): "He forbad himself to search."	–

the teacher did not make "searching"-related comments.

Figures 2 and 3 also reveal that all of the teacher's comments during class implied negative evaluations (with the partial exception of comment B.4), while her remarks during the viewing sessions were mixed. Furthermore, as I will show below, some comments the teacher made in class (A, B.1, B.2) actually seemed to contradict comments made later in the viewing sessions about approximately the same incidents (5.0, 6.1 and 6.2 respectively). Clearly the context of the teacher's remarks shaped their content--perhaps more than any cues within the incidents commented upon.

Cues the Teacher Pointed Out

The search for cues which distinguished "searching" from "not searching" should begin with the teacher's own remarks. During the viewing sessions and in other interviews I asked Jeannette to point out how she knew what she knew, and in some cases she made this explicit. In other cases, it was difficult to "see" what she had "seen."

1.0 Benoît "repeats what the others say." During the November viewing session, Jeannette and I had been watching Benoît and Sandrine on the monitor during the transition from a "show and tell" period to the reading lesson proper. During "show and tell," the teacher (off camera) had transcribed some students' statements onto the blackboard to serve as the text for the lesson.[4] We heard her ask the class to read the sentences aloud in unison. I pointed out Benoît, and Jeannette said, "He doesn't search for

anything at all." We watched the incident again, and she pointed out moment by moment how Benoît "repeats what the others say." Indeed, as the class began to read "dimanche olivier est allé à . . .," Benoît faced the back of the room. He turned back toward the blackboard during the -che syllable of dimanche, pronouncing it and every succeeding syllable a split second after his neighbors. He even repeated the syllable pa, a misreading of the a in allé, after another boy.

2.0 The teacher zeroes in on Jacques. This was the first case in which I cannot "see" what the teacher "saw." The camera had been focused on Cédric and Yann for a moment when it slowly zoomed out to include eight children on the screen with those boys in the center. As it zoomed out, the class was reading in chorus the end of the sentence "j'ai joué avec karine, ma petite copine." Jacques came into view in the lower left corner of the screen for about 45 seconds, not perfectly in focus but seemingly reading with the bulk of the class. When he had been visible for about four seconds, the teacher began her remark by referring to comment 1.0: "Him, he's like Benoît. He repeats after." My first reaction during the interview was to check that she was talking about Jacques instead of another child on the screen. Then, when rewatching the scene at home, I checked to see whether Jacques did "repeat after" in this sequence. I observed that Yann and perhaps one other student were calling out words ahead of the class, which then repeated each word in chorus. Jacques was not "repeating after"

except in the sense that the whole class was picking up the cue from Yann.

3.0 Xavier "doesn't give a damn." The camera had been on Xavier and Jacques for over a minute, and during that time Xavier was raising his hand, reading to himself when others recited, and once reciting aloud, correctly. Then the lesson came to a juncture in which the teacher announced off camera that she was going to put a new series of syllables on the board, and at that moment Xavier leaned forward on his desk and, still looking at the board, gave a five-second yawn. At that point during the viewing session, the teacher commented, "He doesn't give a damn, he's not reading it." Taken aback, I asked if she was referring to Xavier, as I inferred from the timing of her remark. "Yes," she answered. "But he's having trouble, you see? He's not reading. He's looking at the board but he isn't reading, he isn't searching."

I could not determine what cue in the sequence, if any, prompted the teacher to make this remark. Furthermore, I showed this particular sequence to another teacher in France, as well as to a group of American teachers, and all agreed that they could not understand why Xavier's teacher said that he was "not searching" and "not reading." "He's incredibly good," said the French teacher, and an American teacher pointed out that "his hand was up, he was absolutely sure of himself . . . . He knew!"

4.0 Jacques "looks onto the others." Later in the same lesson,

the camera focused on Xavier and Jacques while students off camera were called on to read t-syllables. Watching this, the teacher complained that "Jacques, he looks onto the others before saying something." Although Jacques had not actually said anything in this sequence, he had turned twice toward the student being interrogated off camera just before Jeannette made this comment. About 40 seconds earlier, he had turned around, faced front and turned around again seven times in rapid succession. In the same period of time his neighbor Xavier had turned around only twice, and at a more leisurely pace.

5.0 David decodes a word with the teacher's help. Toward the end of the November lesson, the teacher called on David, who was already on camera, to read a line she wrote on the board, toto a une moto. David, who had been scratching his face, quickly lowered his hand, then hesitated three seconds while another student read to- in a low voice. David repeated to-, and at that point in the viewing session, the teacher said, "Him, he searches." "David searches?" I doublechecked. "Mm. He reads, yes. He searches." I could not pinpoint any behavior on David's part which might have inspired the teacher's comment. In fact, it seemed to me that David had "repeated after" a comrade. Furthermore, as the video sequence continued and David went on sounding out the sentence with considerable help from the teacher, she concluded their interaction with comment A, "But yes, but say it by yourself"--an implication

that he had not been "searching by himself."

6.1 Jacques "doesn't have that bleating voice." Our viewing session of the March lesson began with a protracted sequence on Jacques reading one long sentence from the blackboard, during which Jeannette made three "searching"-related comments. We had already heard the in-class comment B.1, "But when are you going to start doing it by yourself?" and then an exclamation to the whole class, "Oh, let him search!" when Jeannette remarked thoughtfully, "Nonetheless, he's beginning to search a little better by himself." I probed for the reason she said this and she added, "When he says (something), he doesn't have that bleating voice. . . . He no longer has that feeling that he's going to cry right away."

6.2 Jacques' "hands are doing almost nothing." Jeannette's remark about Jacques' voice reminded me of Jacques' nervous hand motions in earlier taped lessons. I pointed out that in the sequence we were watching Jacques did not put his fingers to his lips as he had in November. Jeannette agreed that "his hands are doing almost nothing." "You sense that it's the head that's searching," she concluded after watching another moment. Ironically, just as she ended comment 6.2, her voice could be heard on the monitor complaining to Jacques, "You can't get yourself going to do it by yourself?" (comment B.2).

6.3 Jacques decodes a word "by himself"--or does he? As Jacques continued to struggle through the long sentence, he came to the word passait. After he read it, the teacher said in the viewing

session, "You see? Passait, well, he found the ai (sound) all by himself." Yet on reviewing the tape I discovered that another student had quietly but clearly pronounced the -sait syllable before Jacques read it, and that Jacques did not read it alone but with a small chorus of voices. I could discount the teacher's comment on the assumption that she, as I, missed the whispered remark when first watching the tape. However, she had shown on so many other occasions that she was attuned to whispered help that I hesitate to conclude she did not hear the whisper in this case. Besides, she said, "Be quiet," at the end of this incident, either to the chorus of voices or to the whisperer.

7.1 and 7.2 Jacques raises his hand. Later during the March viewing session, we watched eight children on camera as the teacher, off the screen, called on various students to find words on the board which contained the letter combination ai. "You see, Jacques, nothing," Jeannette pointed out about the boy in the lower left corner of the screen. "He does nothing, Jacques." In the context of her earlier remarks about Jacques' struggle to "search," I took this comment as a rough equivalent to "He's not searching." I was puzzled at the time, for although Jacques was not waving his hand in the air as were many of the students on the screen, he did have a knit brow and a forward lean which suggested concentration and effort--to me.

Suddenly Jacques raised his arm high and straight, and at that moment the teacher said, "Ah, yes he is (si)!"

Apparently she associated "searching" with the hand shot in the air. Indeed, I discovered later in my notes that Jeannette had said of another student a few weeks earlier, "Today she even got to the point of raising her hand on her own. . . . She's raising her hand, therefore she's searching at the board, therefore she's reading by herself."

8.0 Jacques "doesn't wait for the others to tell him." Toward the end of the March lesson, the teacher called on Jacques, who was already on camera, to tell her "what we have each time" in the words circuit, cirque, and the syllable cir. "Ci?" tried Jacques right away, but the teacher said no, for it turned out that she wanted him to say ir. During the viewing session Jeannette remarked, "You see that he knows it nonetheless there. He doesn't wait for the others to tell him." I include this comment as a "searching"-related remark because not waiting for the others implies working "by oneself," which the teacher associated with "searching."

9.0 David decodes another word with help. David was on camera toward the end of the March lesson when the teacher called on him to tell her how to spell the syllable pir. David began, "i," repeating after a student who had whispered, "i . . . ir." The teacher prompted, "I hear--the first, it's what? Pi--" and David tried "pi," then, when the teacher repeated "pir," he said "pir" in a very quiet voice. As a student off camera called out, "Me? Can I say it?" David raised his hand, and at that moment in the viewing session the teacher said, "Look, he's

searching. There it can be seen clearly that he's searching." As with incident 5.0, I cannot identify any behavior on David's part which justified the teacher's remark. Furthermore, the teacher's evaluation at the end of the sequence as recorded on the videotape was ambivalent; after David finally spelled out the letters with the teacher, she said, "But yes, but you needed to say it sooner then."

Although this initial survey did not turn up any cue which by itself distinguished between "searching" and "not searching," some relevant behaviors have been suggested. The teacher associated "repeating after," "looking onto the others" and "waiting for the others to tell" with "not searching," which corresponds to the link between "not searching" and copying in Figure 1. She seemed to associate a steady voice, still hands and a raised hand with "searching."

However, it is more noteworthy that the survey revealed so many ambiguities and contradictions. Why Jeannette said Xavier was "not searching" in comment 3.0 or David was "searching" in comments 5.0 and 9.0 is not at all clear. Comments 2.0 and 6.3 seem to contradict evidence on the videotape outright, while comments 5.0, 6.1 and 6.2 contrast with remarks the teacher made about the same incidents in the midst of class.

Possibly Jeannette was responding in her viewing session comments to cues which she could not or did not make explicit, cues which are not obvious on just one or two viewings of the videotapes. The incidents merit one further, more systematic

investigation. But if a thorough combing of the videotapes does not produce an explanation of the contradictions and ambiguities, the grounds for the teacher's remarks will have to be sought elsewhere.

A Systematic Search for Cues

Hundreds of different behaviors could have distinguished the cases of "searching" from the cases of "not searching." As mentioned before, I will let the teacher's remarks guide me in deciding which potential cues to look for in the entire set of videotaped incidents.

Jeannette's viewing session comments associated "repeating after," "looking onto the others" and "waiting for the others to tell" with "not searching." In addition, comment B.1 suggests that getting help from the teacher signals that a student is "not searching"(see note 11 in Figure 1). Finally, in the baffling incident 3.0 I speculated that Xavier's yawn may have been what provoked the comment "not searching," and I added yawning to the list of behaviors to seek in the other incidents.

Keeping one's hands still was linked to "searching," and alongside that behavior I added keeping one's whole body still, for I remembered occasions when Jeannette pointed out a student rocking back and forth or sprawling all over her desk. The viewing session comments also suggested that raising one's hand and answering in a steady voice might indicate "searching" to the teacher. Finally, giving a reasonable response might be necessary to "searching," for in comment C the teacher said

David was "not searching" when he read the word qui for the syllable ai, quite out of context.

Figure 4 lists these possible indicators of "not searching" and "searching" respectively across the top of the page. Incidents which the teacher identified as cases of "not searching" and then incidents identified as "searching" are listed down the left-hand side of the figure. Figure 4 serves as a scoreboard for my examination of each videotaped incident. Where I determined a behavior to be present, I put a plus sign, and where absent, a minus sign. Blank spaces indicate that the behavior in question was not applicable within the boundaries of the given incident. For instance, one could not expect the student to give a reasonable response (last column) when he did not have the floor.

If a cue consistently counted as "not searching" one would find a column of plus signs below the cue in the upper left quadrant of the figure and a column of minus signs in the lower left. If a cue consistently counted as "searching," there would be a column of minus signs below it in the upper right quadrant and a column of plus signs in the lower right. It is already clear that no such simple pattern exists. However, things are more complicated still.

Problems in Determining Whether a Cue Occurred

The plus signs and minus signs in Figure 4 look crisp and persuasive in black and white, but they require a big caveat. There were many cases in which it was not clear to this observor

Figure 4 Which Cues Were Observable in Which Incidents?

INCIDENTS	POSSIBLE CUES: Repeats after	Looks onto others	Waits for others	Gets teacher's help	Yawns	Keeps hands still	Keeps body still	Raises hand	Has steady voice	Gives reasonable response
"Not Searching"										
1.0 (Benoit/class)	+	+			−	+	−			
2.0 (Jacques/class)	−	−			−	+	−			
3.0 (Xavier/others)		−			+	−	−	+		
4.0 (Jacques/others)		+			−	−	−	−		
7.1 (Jacques/others)		−			−	+	+	−		
"Searching"										
5.0 (David/alone)	+	−	+	−	−	−	−	−	+	+
6.1 (Jacques/alone)	−	−	+	+	−	+	+		+	+
6.2 (Jacques/alone)	+	−	+	+	−	+	+		−	+
6.3 (Jacques/alone)	+	−	−	−	−	+	+		+	+
7.2 (Jacques/others)		−			−	+	+	+		
8.0 (Jacques/alone)	−	−	−	−	−	−	+		+	+
9.0 (David/alone)	−	−	−	+	−	−	−	+	−	+

whether the behavior named as a possible cue took place during a video sequence or not--and this despite the benefit of re-watching the sequences ad infinatum. I might have called in other observors, developed a certain measurable level of "reliability" with them and let it go, but a measure of reliability would have masked the essential ambiguity which is so interesting in these incidents. Instead, let me illustrate some of the difficulties of interpretation and some of the "documentary work" (Garfinkel, 1967:94-103) I did to produce Figure 4.

Repeating after. I have already mentioned that in incident 2.0 Jacques appeared to read in unison with the bulk of the class, and did not seem to "repeat after" except in the sense that the whole class repeated after one or two students. Thus I marked "repeating after" as absent in this incident despite the teacher's direct statement that Jacques was "repeating."

Waiting for the others to tell. Identifying this behavior proved sticky on several points. First, how long a pause constitutes "waiting" as opposed to a normal pause before answering the teacher's question? When I rewatched the incidents, a pause of three seconds of more "felt" too long, so I used that arbitrary measure in scoring the incidents. But just because a student paused for more than three seconds he was not necessarily waiting deliberately for help. In the sequence which led to comment 6.1, Jacques paused for over five seconds and his classmates whispered the syllable he was struggling with, yet he did not pick up on their assistance.

On the assumption that he simply did not hear or did not trust what they whispered, I still hesitantly scored him as "waiting" in this incident. Finally, there were incidents like 6.3 in which a classmate whispered an answer so quickly that the student had no need to wait even if he had intended to.

A reasonable response. Distinguishing a reasonable from an unreasonable response always required interpretation, for "reasonable" was not synonymous with "correct." In only one case among all the incidents examined did a student produce precisely the response the teacher sought on his first try, and even in that case (incident 5.0) David was repeating after a classmate. In all the other incidents the student gave some response, such as reading the g of grand as a "soft g" in incident 6.2, which the teacher did not allow to stand but did not treat as outrageous.

Raising one's hand. In these incidents, I never had to face the problem of distinguishing raising one's hand from giving a stretch or scratching one's head. However, for cases in which the student did not raise his hand, it was difficult to determine whether raising one's hand would have been the appropriate behavior in that situation. It is not enough to notice that students in the background are raising their hands. For example, at five different points during the incidents of the 6.0 series, Jacques kept his hand down while other students raised theirs. Were these junctures at which students could legitimately bid for the floor (Mehan, 1979:143-144) and at which Jacques should

have raised his hand to show he was "searching," or was it understood that he continued to hold the floor without having to bid? I settled on the second interpretation and scored raising one's hand as not applicable in these incidents.

Where do boundaries fall around an incident? When trying to decide in which incidents a student raised his hand, I encountered the most difficult problem of interpretation yet. In comment 3.0, Jeannette seemed to be responding negatively to a very brief strip of video sequence in which Xavier yawned and stretched, ignoring the fact that just twelve seconds before the yawn he had been raising his hand and had even been called on to answer. Could she really be discounting immediately preceeding behavior and responding to so narrowly circumscribed an incident?

I looked at her response to a different incident to decide whether that was plausible. Earlier during the same viewing session we had been watching Yann and Cédric during a point in the lesson when the class was reading the board in unison. The boys were both playing with their mouths and, though Cédric was reading along, Yann said nothing except to call out the word copine at one point ahead of the class. Instead of commenting that these two didn't "give a damn" or weren't "searching," as Jeannette said of Xavier in comment 3.0, she simply chuckled at their fooling around. Eventually she excused them with the remark, "That bores them a little . . . everyone reading together." To explain Jeannette's reaction,

I can point out that Yann did give the one demonstration that he was following and could read the text when he called out copine about fifteen seconds before the teacher's remark. But if the teacher took Yann's behavior fifteen seconds before into account, why assume she ignored Xavier's behavior twelve seconds before comment 3.0? Xavier's raised hand had to be included as part of the incident to which comment 3.0 referred, even though this made the comment very difficult to justify.

Does Any Cue Count as "Searching" or "Not Searching"?

Set aside reservations about how Figure 4 was produced for a moment and consider whether it reveals any cue or combination of cues as distinguishing between "searching" and "not searching."

No single cue distinguishes absolutely between the negative and positive cases. That is, there is no solid column of plus signs opposing a solid column of minus signs underneath a single cue.

Nor is there any pattern of plus and minus signs which indicates that some combination of cues distinguishes absolutely between "searching" and "not searching." Neither the intersection of two cues (e.g., when a student both "repeated after" and "looked onto the others") nor the union of two cues (e.g., when a student either raised his hand or gave a reasonable response) makes for a distinctive feature.

Is there some cue which identifies "searching" or "not searching" in a particular kind of situation only? This analysis has already been restricted to lessons at the blackboard, but even within that setting, the teacher observed a student in

different situations--reading with the class, listening to others recite, reciting alone. There are too few comments about students who are reading with the class (1.0 and 2.0 only) to uncover any pattern. When other students read (3.0, 4.0, 7.1 and 7.2), no cue consistently distinguished the first three, negatively evaluated incidents from the last, positively evaluated incident. (Although Jacques' raising his hand seemed to provoke the teacher's decision that he was "searching" after all in comment 7.2, she saw Xavier as "not searching" in comment 3.0 despite Xavier's frequently raised hand.) All the comments about students reciting alone (5.0, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 8.0, 9.0) were positive. Therefore, even though the student always gave a reasonable response, never "looked onto the others" and never yawned in those situations, one cannot be sure whether those cues counted as "searching" or whether the mere fact that the student was engaged in solo performance persuaded the teacher that he was "searching." Thus no cues which absolutely count as "searching" or "not searching" can be identified even when the student's situation is taken into account.

Although the small number of cases makes a probabilistic analysis untrustworthy, it is tempting to try one. Are there any cues which show up in most incidents (two-thirds of relevant cases, let us say) labeled "searching" but which show up in few incidents (one-third or less of applicable cases) labeled "not searching," or vice versa? Two such cues can be found.

The student raised his hand in few (one out of three) cases of "not searching" but most (two out of three) cases of "searching." He kept his body still in few (one out of five) negative cases but most (five out of seven) positive cases. Again it seems that raising one's hand persuaded the teacher that one is "searching," comment 3.0 notwithstanding. And when raising one's hand was not appropriate, sitting still would generally convince her.

Summary

This analysis failed to identify perceptual cues within the videotaped incidents which consistently distinguished the cases of "searching" from the cases of "not searching." At best I can conclude that the teacher usually said a child was "searching" if he was reciting alone (and producing a reasonable response), if he was raising his hand, or if he was sitting still. Even that statement is suspect, not only because of the small number of cases but because the cues themselves proved ambiguous. Moreover, I have not explained why the teacher's comments sometimes took immediately preceeding events into account and sometimes not, nor why she paid attention to a particular student while ignoring his neighbors.

Furthermore, the teacher's comments about "searching" seemed actually to contradict the perceptual cues in cases 2.0, 3.0 and 6.3. In other cases (5.0, 6.1 and 6.2) her comments during the viewing sessions contradicted what she had said to the students during class. Clearly the grounds for the teacher's viewing session remarks cannot be located

within the narrow (and uncertain) boundaries of the incidents to which they apparently referred.

An explanation of the contradictions will have to draw on the background knowledge (Leiter, 1976) which the teacher brought to the viewing sessions. The fact that only four students attracted comments about "searching" suggests that her background knowledge about individual students' "biographies" will be particularly informative.

Ultimately, an explanation will also have to account for the effect of the context in which the teacher made her remarks on their content.

Theories and Strategies, Individually Tailored

Let us begin the second round of analysis by asking what the teacher was doing in puzzling comment 2.0. Although she stated that Jacques was "repeating after," I have argued that there was no evidence on the screen at that moment to support such a claim. This fact, plus the reference to Benoit with which her comment began, suggest that Jeannette was making a generalization about Jacques rather than describing the events before her on the monitor. Maybe I should have translated her statement as "Jacques repeats after (in general)" rather than "Jacques is repeating after (right there)." (The French verb form, il répète, can convey either meaning.) In other kinds of interviews Jeannette often made generalizations about students even when I pressed her for concrete details. It is plausible that she did the same in the viewing sessions. She

may have been "waiting" to say what she said as soon as an opportunity arose; indeed, she made comment 2.0 when Jacques first appeared on the screen. Perhaps the appearance of his face rather than anything he did at that moment triggered the comment.

Similarly, baffling remarks like 5.0 and 3.0 might also have been generalizations. Jeannette made comment 5.0 about David at his first appearance on the screen as well. Although he squirmed in his seat, took long pauses before venturing a response and repeated the whispers of his neighbors, the teacher promptly said, "He searches," as though she were prepared to make that observation no matter what the details of his behavior. She did not make comment 3.0 about Xavier when Xavier first appeared on the screen, but perhaps only because she was preoccupied at the time with Xavier's neighbor Jacques. However, when Xavier yawned and lolled on his desk during a break in the lesson, he provided a suitable moment for her to begin a generalization with, "Now he doesn't give a damn."

The "biography" Jeannette had developed for each of these boys may explain why she had these specific statement to make. By "biography" I mean all the comments she made to and about a child as accumulated in my observation notes and interview transcripts. I will show that Jeannette had formulated individualized theories about why Jacques and Xavier performed as they did, and that she expressed these theories in her viewing session comments. David's case is more complicated, for her

statements about his behavior did not directly reflect the eloborate theory she had developed about his performance.

Xavier

The teacher developed several hypotheses about Xavier at first, and did not give me a full expression of a theory until March. In September and October, she said the boy was a chatterbox because his old-fashioned mother didn't let him talk at home. Then in November she made a few remarks which foreshadowed the theory she elaborated later. Pointing out Xavier descending a staircase all by himself, she said of his isolation from his classmates, "That's typical." About the same time, she scolded him in class for being an "old man" who's "never awake." Then came her complaints in the November viewing session that he didn't "give a damn," and, later, that he "hadn't the least interest (n'a rien à voir)." Finally, in an interview in March she linked the themes of isolation from the class and lack of interest, saying

> He's discrete, he says nothing, so I have a tendency to forget him.[5] . . . He doesn't manage to communicate with me, (nor) with the class. He doesn't manage to come out of his shell (sortir de lui). . . . He has never said something interesting.

Meanwhile, Jeannette had developed the theme of the interfering mother. She had noted the mother's overprotectiveness during the first week of the schoolyear, when Xavier was still doing "very well." Then in January she discovered that the mother was practicing reading with the boy at home, using a method which conflicted with the teacher's. This would not

bother another child, Jeannette told me, but for Xavier it was too much.

However, when the teacher divided the class into two reading groups in late March and placed Xavier in the lower group, it was his lack of interest rather than his mother's interference to which she made reference. She admitted a few weeks before placing him in the lower group that if you ask him something in reading, "he's going to know." But, she added a moment later,

> with his "wall," often you wonder if he's attentive, you wonder if he's following, you wonder if he's understood. . . . Because he's so neutral that . . .

and her voice trailed off. Thus the phrase "he doesn't give a damn" rather than the statement "he isn't searching" is the key to comment 3.0 in the November viewing session. "Not searching" in this context connotes not caring enough to make an effort.

Jacques

Jeannette's theory about Jacques also shifted over time, and the shift is evident in the difference between her November and March viewing session comments.

At the beginning of the year, she found Jacques an "interesting" child who was doing "fine." He mispronounced certain words and his writing was awkward, but he was "talkative," "not timid," and was "breezing along (ne peine pas)." Then in October Jeannette complained that Jacques was "saying anything" when called on to recite. By early November she had developed a theory about what was, by then, poor performance: "It's not

that he doesn't know, it's that he's not sure of himself."

Watching the videotapes of the November reading lesson, Jeannette pointed out one scene after another to document this theory. She constructed the argument that because Jacques was so unsure of himself, he looked to his classmates for help instead of "searching" by himself. First, comment 2.0 stated the theory with little reference to the events on the monitor. A little later, the camera focused on Jacques reading aloud by himself, and Jeannette was able to point out how he was "not sure of himself" and "afraid" at particular moments.[6] Even when other students had the floor, she could show, Jacques "is panicked, he doesn't know, he's not sure of himself, he doesn't know whether he ought to raise his hand." Finally, in comment 4.0 she pointed to Jacques' "looking onto the others." Thus comment 2.0 anticipated what she was able to document later with more credibility.

In January, certain events allowed Jeannette to modify her conception of Jacques' performance. Lately, she felt, Jacques had taken to answering her questions in class very quietly so that he could buy time by having her repeat the question until a classmate would whisper the answer. (She was able to point out his technique in the January viewing session.) This so frustrated her that she called a conference with the boy's mother. After the conference, Jeannette said Jacques was speaking up a little more and was "in the process

of making an effort." The teacher maintained this vaguely optimistic image of Jacques' work through early March, when she noted that he was paying a little more attention and was reading some words "by himself," even though he was still "not sure of himself." Meanwhile, she had found an acceptable secondary explanation of Jacques' continued poor performance: he had been on antibiotics for three weeks in January and was ill again during the week-long vacation in February.

During the March viewing session, most of Jeannette's comments reflected her new willingness to give Jacques the benefit of the doubt. In comment 6.3 especially she ignored the whispered help he was still getting from comrades. On the other hand, an undercurrent of exasperation with the child still surfaced occasionally. Late in the viewing session she suddenly remarked, without any reference to the immediately preceeding events on the monitor,

> Look, it's true that with Jacques, I speak harshly to him. That--at the beginning, nonetheless, I try to speak normally to him, you know, as I do to everyone.

"He bugs you," I proposed. "What bugs me, she replied, "is that he doesn't search." This continuing perception that Jacques did not "search" may explain the eagerness with which Jeannette focused on Jacques in a field of eight children to make comment 7.1: "You see, Jacques, nothing."

For Jacques, "not searching" meant "saying anything" in October. From November on, the teacher equated it in his case with "repeating after" or "looking onto the others," tactics she

ascribed to a lack of self-confidence.

David

Very early in the year, Jeannette formed the theory that David performed poorly because life had stacked the cards against his success in school. She hypothesized that he wanted to learn and usually applied himself. In his case she used the word "searching" to connote "making an effort."

However, her theory alone does not explain the unguarded optimism of her comments 5.0 and 9.0, which is difficult to justify on the basis of the videotaped incidents. I believe the teacher developed a strategy of talking about David's performances in a positive light, despite her private theory about his behavior, as a response to the extremity of his problems.

Jeannette's biography of David actually began a year before she met him, when she had his older sister Cécile in class. Cécile did very poorly and went on to a class for the mildly retarded rather than to second grade. When the teacher encountered David on the first day of the new schoolyear, she pointed out to me that he was "alert," unlike his sister. However, she had to admit in the following days that although David acted attentive, his attention was "brief," that although he applied himself, he worked very slowly, and that he pronounced words very poorly. In November she added that David didn't "know anything."

The teacher knew as early as September why David was as he

was. The boy's father was an alcoholic, she told me, and had been out of work for months. The mother spoke as poorly as David did, and the parents together cared so little about education that David missed class frequently. As if that were not enough, the school medical examination later in the year revealed that David had very weak vision, which was not corrected until April. As the teacher summarized her continuing perception of the situation in a letter in June, David's "family milieu is truly impoverished, and he must constantly make an effort, on his own, to keep at his work."

In response to this situation, Jeannette consistently accentuated the positive, both in her remarks to David and in her comments about him. Her motives, I infer, were to minimize his own discouragement as he faced inevitable failures, and to actively counteract her own negative expectations for his performance.[7] On the third day of class, Jeannette praised David amply in front of the others for remembering to bring a slate and other materials. She doggedly corrected his pronunciation and referred him to a speech therapy program to which his parents took him for a while. Although she did criticize him in class, as comments A and C show, and she could be harsh with him for his mispronunciation or his slowness, I sensed that she was easier on him than on the other students most of the time. Meanwhile, she talked to me and to herself throughout the year as though David were on the verge of performing satisfactorily. In mid-October, when David successfully sounded out the word le (the),

Jeannette said under her breath, "It's beginning to begin." She made comments in the same vein in December ("David's begun to work well since yesterday," and "He's beginning to understand how to work, how to search . . ."), in January ("Things are beginning to enter (his head)."), and--without a hint of irony--in March ("David is off to a good start.").

Perhaps the teacher's desire to talk positively about David explains why she stressed that he made an effort to learn. The claim that he was trying did not require the same kind of hard evidence, that is, successful outcomes, as the claim that he was in fact succeeding.

All the while that Jeannette talked optimistically about David's performance, she conceded his continuing problems in footnotes to her remarks. For instance, she pointed out how David was "searching" during a slate dictation on the November videotape, but acknowledged that he didn't manage to write down the word he had been sounding out. During the same viewing session she said, "If he continues like that, he'll do a good first grade," but had to add, "well, a good first grade for him." In a report to me in April, Jeannette noted that David was still "weak" in reading. At the end of the year, although she cheerily wrote that David "responds in lively fashion to the questions I pose in reading," she admitted that he was one of four children whose prospects in second grade worried her.

The teacher's positive comments 5.0 and 9.0, then, do not represent misperceptions of cues from the incidents. They are

statements molded to suit a general strategy of optimism.

Yann

Similarly, the fact that the teacher made no comments at all about "searching" in Yann's case can be explained by the strategy which derived from her theory about him.

Jeannette's theory about Yann was, by early November, quite simple. The boy "practically knows how to read" already. She could point to various incidents in which he demonstrated his knowledge. In the videotaped November lesson, for instance, Jeannette called on Yann and he read the syllable teu, which had stumped Cédric. Later in the lesson, she observed that "Yann and others as well, they saw that (in té and tè) the accent was not the same."

At the beginning of the year, the teacher was less complimentary about Yann. She told me that the boy's father was a physician, and that his well-spoken parents put Yann in an advantaged position. Therefore she supected that Yann was only a bête savante, a "word mill" who said intelligent sounding things without understanding what he was saying. She also complained, in a remark reminiscent of her criticism of Xavier, that Yann had "no personality" and did not interact appropriately with his comrades. As Jeannette said positive things about David to counter her negative expectations, so her gloomy remarks about Yann in these early months may have been tailored to counter her expectations that the priveleged child would inevitably excel.

In any case, after a week's vacation at the end of October, Jeannette found that Yann's participation in class had improved markedly. Yann's mother came to tell the teacher that the boy's ears, which had been blocked, were drained during the vacation; this provided a physical cause to which the teacher could attribute her previous complaints. From that point, Yann's good performance was taken for granted.

Jeannette expected that superior students like Yann would get bored. Therefore, she adopted the strategy of making casual remarks about letters the class had not yet studied, so that Michel and Yann and others "don't waste too much of their time." That is why she confidently called on Yann to read the teu syllable, even though the eu sound had not yet been taught formally, in the videotaped November lesson. She also indulged their inclination to daydream. There were some students who would have trouble coming back to the lesson if she let them "dream" too much, Jeannette explained in January, but

> Yann, Michel, Cédric--I can let them (dream) longer, because they've already acquired more of the mechanism, are more with it (entrainés), are more at ease.

In other words, as she told Yann's mother in January, even if Yann didn't pay attention, it was "O.K."

Thus the teacher accounted, at least in retrospect, for her bemused tolerance of Yann's bored behavior during the November lesson, a tolerance which contrasted so sharply with comment 3.0 about Xavier. Although Yann wiggled in his seat, pulled at his mouth and looked off in the distance while the others read,

Jeannette did not say that he "didn't give a damn," wasn't "reading" or wasn't "searching." "Reading" and "searching" were no longer issues for Yann. He was to be permitted, even encouraged, to "dream."

Average Students

In addition to students having trouble in reading like Benoit, Xavier, Jacques and David, and students breezing along ahead of the class like Michel, Cédric and Yann, there were students who progressed in learning to read according to schedule. These "average-good" students, as the teacher once called them, faded into the background in the videotaped lessons. They inspired no comments about "searching," indeed almost no comments at all during the viewing sessions. This is not to say that the teacher paid no attention to average students in other contexts. A talley of her interaction with students during class showed that no student passed even a one-hour period without interacting with the teacher at least three times on the days studied. And in informal conversation and other kinds of interviews, Jeannette had unique observations to make about every child concerning his or her drawings, workshop projects, parents, siblings, personality or traits. However, for students who posed no problem in reading, Jeannette did not need to develop an individualized teaching strategy as she had for David, nor even an elaborate theory about their reading progress. Thus in the viewing sessions, which emphasized reading lessons, she had no theory to document and no strategy to act out for her

"average-good" students.

The teacher counted Sandrine, for instance, among the "average-good" in November. Sandrine sat next to Benoît and appeared with him for several minutes during the November viewing session, but she did not attract a single comment. In January, Jeannette rated Sandrine's performance as "good-good," closer to that of the best students, and when we had occasion to watch Yann, Michel and Sandrine read aloud very briefly in the January viewing session, Jeannette said simply, "You see, those ones read pof (pow)!" Her theory about Sandrine had only one twist. She noticed that the girl tired easily, and attributed this to the fact that Sandrine was "young," that is, a year ahead in school, and therefore having to work extra hard.

Georges and Karim were other "invisible" students in the viewing sessions. During a slate dictation on the November videotape, the camera focused on Georges and Karim for three full minutes, but instead of commenting on their behavior the teacher made a remark about Benoît, who was sitting behind them. In the March videotape, Georges and Karim sat prominently in the middle of the screen, Karim holding his hand up persistently, when the teacher ignored them to make comments 7.1 and 7.2 about Jacques in the lower corner of the screen.

The teacher's theory about Georges and Karim's reading at that time was no more elaborate than the observation that they were doing "fine." Their performances were so unremarkable

that the teacher had neither a problem nor a noteworthy accomplishment to explain. Thus she scarcely referred to the novelties in the boys' biographies--the facts that Georges had been deaf earlier in life and that Karim spoke Arabic at home--which would have been so handy as explanations if explanations had been needed.

Summary

I speculated that some of the teacher's more baffling comments could be understood as generalizations she wanted to make about certain students rather than literal descriptions of video sequences. This assumption permitted me to explain Jeannette's viewing session comments about Jacques and Xavier as references to theories she had already formulated about each boy. In David's case, the teacher showed less interest in pointing out the deficiencies which her theory acknowledged than in acting out a strategy of praising the boy. Similarly, in her comments about Yann Jeannette was acting out a strategy --in his case, a policy of <u>laissez faire</u> based on her theory that he was excelling and necessarily would excel in reading. Students who were performing appropriately but not out of the ordinary in reading invited neither elaborate theorizing nor special policies, and this may explain why they drew no comments during the viewing sessions.

In this perspective, "searching" was a word which, by late November, the teacher considered relevant to none but the students having trouble with reading. Even in their cases she

manipulated the connotations of the word to suit her theory about the individual.

Conclusion

The first part of this paper showed that the grounds for the teacher's comments about "searching" could not be located within the boundaries of the videotaped incidents to which the comments ostensibly referred. Now the examination of students' "biographies" suggests that the teacher's pre-exising theory about a child had a role in determining whether she said the child was "searching," or whether "searching" was an issue at all.

In a sense, my original model of how a teacher interprets student behavior had the sequence of events reversed. Jeannette did not "add up" cues from a continuing series of incidents to determine whether a child "searched," nor did she "add up" generalizations about "searching" and other behaviors to produce an overall evaluation of the child. Instead, she entered the viewing sessions with a theory (and by implication an evaluation) already formulated. The theory influenced what she said about "searching" with respect to specific incidents.

In order to determine what counts as success in Jeannette's class, then, I would have to identify the particular cues to which Jeannette attended in formulating her original theories about students, and to discover under what unusual circumstances she might later take notice of a cue ordinarily "filtered out"

by an original theory.

The Comments as Speech Acts

But before embarking on a second quest for the perceptual cues which eluded the camera the first time, I would have to find a research method which did not depend on the teacher's talk. The current study demonstrated that Jeannette's talk did not faithfully mirror her perceptions. Her optimistic observations about David, for instance, contradicted the "true" picture of his performance which she hinted at in other situations. Her remarks about "searching" in class contrasted with her viewing session comments about the same incidents; only one of those sets of remarks, at most, could reflect her "true" perceptions.

In fact, this study did not concern perception at all, but how the teacher talked about students in different kinds of situations. It illustrated how busy she was "doing things with words"(Austin, 1962), shaping her "speech acts" to her own purposes and to the social contexts in which she found herself.

For example, in the midst of class the teacher generally meant a comment about "searching" to exhort a student to greater effort ("No, no, you search!"). If she also let loose an occasional remark simply to express her own exasperation ("You can't do that by yourself?!?"), she still shaped it to spur the student to perform better. The negative, critical tone of her comments reflected her absolute authority over the students within the context of the reading lesson, and it conformed

to the French cultural norm that adults may criticize children freely in public without regard for saving the child's face (Spiegel, 1978:44, 114-115; Wylie, 1964:78).

During the viewing sessions, on the other hand, Jeannette was addressing a foreign ethnographer rather than 24 wiggly charges. In those situations, as I have shown most convincingly in Jacques' case, she sought to document the theories she had already expressed to me in earlier conversations. Once or twice she may still have been groping for a hypothesis rather than stating one outright, as in comments 6.1 and 6.2 when she and I jointly produced a list of behaviors to confirm her initially tentative proposal that Jacques was "beginning to search." And in David's case, I have argued, she was acting out a strategy for dealing with the boy more than describing his performance literally.

In all her viewing session comments, Jeannette was trying to portray herself as a thoughtful, competent professional (just as I was trying in my remarks to portray myself as a credible researcher). She was actually accounting for her own behavior towards the students, which I had witnessed in many days of classroom observation, as much as for their behavior. That is why she concentrated on students with whom she had the longest and loudest interactions everyday in class. She restated theories about their performance to imply why she handled each one as she did, and she pointed to fleeting incidents on the screen (for I had, after all, asked her to point to the video sequences) to justify the theories she had developed.

In the reflective atmosphere of the viewing sessions, she could qualify negative comments she heard herself make on the monitor or, free from the need to spur a student with criticism, make a completely complimentary remark. It is no surprise after all that the viewing session remarks differed markedly from the comments in class.

What About Meaning?

All researchers interested in people's systems of meanings run into the same "problem" when they use talk as data. Their informants, whether conversing with a neighbor or responding to the ethnographer's queries, are busy doing things with words. They care that the words accomplish the task and suit the situation at hand, not that they convey a consistent meaning from one situation to the next. And people are perfectly right to worry more about use than reference. It may be an ethnocentric bias for Western scholars to assume that language's main job is to name things. (See Rosaldo, 1980, for one non-Western theory of what language is about.)

To say that people talk to do things other than label the world is not to say that words have no meaning. Even talk that a person uses to exhort or account for or exclaim makes reference to implicit categories of Things That Are. Although Jeannette manipulated the connotations of "searching" to fit different theories about different children, she did evoke certain connotations and not others in using the word. In fact, I deduced those connotations, sketched in Figure 1, from comments she made

to me and to students for purposes far different from illustrating the meaning of "searching."

However, just as it was misleading to think of perceptual cues as "out there" in the environment, it is misleading to think of systems of meaning--cognitive maps--as "in" people's heads. The model that people go around matching cognitive maps to the world does not work, for "people are not just map-readers; they are map-makers" (Frake, 1977:6).

I showed how ambiguous perceptual cues can be. When I rewatched the videotapes months after the viewing sessions, I came to doubt that some of the evidence the teacher had pointed to could be found on the tapes. However, during the viewing sessions when the teacher said Jacques was not "searching," we let her comment stand. By our ensuing talk--and silences--we confirmed that the event had occurred. Although we remained open to possible reinterpretions of what had happened, we made it true for the time being that Jacques had not "searched."

In the same way, by using the word "searching" over and over without questioning it, we confirmed that "searching" was indeed a category of behavior, and one of some significance to a child's performance in learning to read. We recreated the meaning of the word, sometimes adding a new twist or modifying an old connotation, every time we used it.

In short, using talk as data does not pose a problem. Real talk in ordinary situations does not obscure the meanings of words any more than it hides the cues to which people are

responding. Both meanings and cues are made in talk.

In further investigations of what counts as success in school, I would do well to continue examining what people do in talking. I should ask how teacher, students, parents--and researchers--accomplish various speech acts, including the sorting of students, in their conversations, notes, conferences and interviews. I should also ask how our talk recreates the very system of ideas which implies that students are sortable.

NOTES

1. The research reported in this paper was supported by grants from the National Science Foundation, the National Institute for Mental Health, and the Council for European Studies. I would like to thank Charles Frake, Michelle Rosaldo, Sylvia Yanagisako, Bernard Siegel and Robert Textor for very helpful discussions of the ideas presented here.

2. The other first grade teachers studied also used the word "searching" in their comments to students and to me, but not as saliently as Jeannette did. Nor did their use of the word seem to carry as many connotations as it did for Jeannette. For them, the behavior of "searching" meant "looking for the answer," and was properly followed by the behavior labeled "finding."

   It is not necessary to this study of what counted as instances of "searching" in Jeannette's classroom that the category of "searching" be used exactly the same by all teachers. The generalizable findings will concern how words are used, not the specific meaning of "searching." In fact, it is interesting that a category of behavior very important in one classroom should be less so in others, for this suggests that what counts as success in first grade is far from universal.

3. The original French will be available in my dissertation. All translations, such as "to get oneself going by oneself" for s'énnerver tout seul, are my own and depend on familiarity with the class and its teacher as much as a knowledge of French.

4. Although French teachers more frequently use published readers, using sentences produced by the students as the reading text is not uncommon in France.

5. Actually the teacher did not ignore Xavier, according to a talley of the number of interactions she had with each student on two half-days in November. The number of her interactions with Xavier fell within the mode.

6. The evidence for this comment, unlike the evidence for comment 2.0, could be easily located on the videotape. I showed one minute of this sequence to another French teacher and she recognized that the text "posed problems" for Jacques. I showed it to a group of American teachers and, even without the benefit of translation, they recognized that Jacques was "wavering" and "trying to pick up a clue from somebody else."

7. Jeannette almost certainly knew of the dangers of the self-fulfilling prophecy. Pygmalion in the Classroom appeared in France in 1971, and more than one French educator cited it to me. Jeannette's own principal kept children's kindergarten files from her first grade teachers during the first trimester to discourage the formation of negative expectations.

REFERENCES CITED

Austin, J. L.
1962 How to Do Things with Words. New York: Oxford University Press.

Frake, Charles O.
1961 The Diagnosis of Disease among the Subanun of Mindanao. American Anthropologist 63(1):113-132.

1977 Plying Frames Can Be Dangerous. Quarterly Newsletter of the Institute for Comparative Human Development 1(3):1-7.

Garfinkel, Harold
1967 Studies in Ethnomethodology. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Joyce, Bruce
1978-79 Toward a Theory of Information Processing in Teaching. Educational Research Quarterly 3(4):66-77.

Leiter, Kenneth C. W.
1976 Teachers' Use of Background Knowledge to Interpret Test Scores. Sociology of Education 49:59-65.

Mehan, Hugh
1979 Learning Lessons. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Neisser, Ulric
1976 Cognition and Reality. San Francisco: W. H. Freeman.

Rosaldo, Michelle
1980 The Things We Do With Words: Ilongot Speech Acts and Speech Act Theory in Philosophy. Manuscript.

Shavelson, Richard J., and Hilda Borko
1979 Research on Teachers' Decisions in Planning Instruction. Educational Horizons 57(4):183-189.

Shulman, Lee S., and Arthur S. Elstein
1975 Studies of Problem Solving, Judgment, and Decision Making: Implications for Educational Research. In Review of Research in Education, vol. 3, Fred N. Kerlinger, ed. Itasca, Il.: Peacock.

Spiegel, Sanda Jo
1978 Education and Community in a French Village. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.

Spradley, James P., and David W. McCurdy
1972 The Cultural Experience. Chicago: Science Research Associates.

Wylie, Laurence
1964 Village in the Vaucluse. New York: Harper and Row.